

**INTERCHANGEABLE PRECIOUS
STONE MOUNTING ARRANGEMENT**

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Attorney Docket: 3656-00014

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Cross-Reference to Related Application

[0001] The present application is based on and claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/473,645 filed on May 28, 2003.

Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention generally relates to a mounting arrangement for a precious stone. More specifically, the present invention relates to a mounting arrangement that allows multiple precious stones to be interchanged from within the single mounting arrangement to create a piece of jewelry having an appearance that can be easily changed.

Background of the Invention

[0003] Presently, precious stones are mounted by jewelers within a setting such that the precious stone does not become dislodged and lost. Since most settings are intended to permanently display the precious stone, each precious stone must have its own unique presentation. Therefore, if an owner desires to have multiple pieces of jewelry each having a precious stone of a different color, such as a ruby necklace and an emerald necklace, the owner must purchase not only separate precious stones but also separate mounting structures for the stones.

[0004] In many cases, the mounting structures are formed from a precious metal, such as gold or platinum, which increases the cost of each additional piece of jewelry.

[0005] Therefore, a need exists for a mounting arrangement that allows precious stone to be removed from within a mounting arrangement and replaced with another precious stone of a different color or physical appearance to change the appearance of the piece of jewelry. A need also exists for a mounting arrangement that allows the owner of the jewelry to easily and securely retain the precious stones within the mounting arrangement without requiring specialized knowledge to present the stone in a visually pleasing manner.

Summary of the Invention

[0006] The present invention generally relates to a precious stone mounting arrangement that allows the owner of a piece of jewelry to selectively interchange the precious stone while utilizing the same mounting arrangement. The mounting arrangement of the present invention allows for quick, easy and secure removal and replacement of the precious stone without requiring specialized knowledge.

[0007] The stone mounting arrangement of the present invention includes a base portion and an outer housing attachable to the base portion. The base portion includes a frustoconical stone support surface that extends from a top rim to a bottom end. The support surface is configured to engage a lower, faceted portion of the precious stone to be retained within the mounting arrangement. The base portion includes a series of external threads that engage a mating series of internal threads formed on the outer housing.

[0008] The internal threads of the outer housing allow the outer housing to be threadedly engaged along the outer surface of the base portion. Rotation of the outer housing moves the outer housing along the outer wall of the base portion.

[0009] The outer housing includes an annular face surface having an opening defined by an inner edge. The opening defined by the inner edge presents and frames the precious stone used with the mounting arrangement. The inner edge defines a circular contact surface that engages a faceted upper portion of the precious stone and presses the precious stone into a secure engagement with the stone support surface of the base portion. When the outer housing is tightened along the base portion, the inner edge of the annular face surface presses the precious stone into the base portion to securely hold the precious stone within the pendant. The diameter of the inner edge of the annular face surface is less than the diameter of the precious stone such that the precious stone is securely held within the mounting arrangement and prevented from falling out of the mounting arrangement.

[0010] The mounting arrangement of the present invention can be incorporated in many types of jewelry, such as a pendant, earrings, charm bracelets,

rings or similar types of jewelry. Further, the mounting arrangement can be used to present multiple types of stones, such as diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and such. It is contemplated that the outer housing can be formed from various types of metallic materials, such as gold, platinum, sterling silver or other desirable metals.

[0011] Various other features, objects and advantages of the invention will be made apparent from the following description taken together with the drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0012] The drawings illustrate the best mode presently contemplated of carrying out the invention.

[0013] In the drawings:

[0014] Fig. 1 is a side view of a pendant incorporating the stone mounting arrangement of the present invention;

[0015] Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the pendant shown in Fig. 1;

[0016] Fig. 3 is an exploded view illustrating the stone mounting arrangement and multiple precious stones that can be mounted within the pendant; and

[0017] Fig. 4 is a partial section view taken along line 4-4 of Fig. 2 illustrating the retention of one of the stones within the pendant of the present invention.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments

[0018] Referring first to Fig. 1, there is shown a pendant 10 that incorporates the interchangeable stone mounting arrangement of the present invention. Although the drawing figures and the remaining portions of the description will be directed to a pendant 10 for use with a necklace, it should be understood that the interchangeable stone mounting arrangement of the present invention can be used in other types of jewelry, such as a charm bracelet, earrings, a ring or other similar embodiments while operating within the scope of the present invention.

[0019] As illustrated in Fig. 1, the pendant 10 includes a hanger 12 and a cylindrical outer housing 14 such that the pendant 10 can be attached to a standard necklace (not shown). In the embodiment of the invention illustrated in Fig. 1, the

outer housing 14 has a recessed groove 16 that provides a more pleasing appearance to the pendant 10.

[0020] As can be seen in Fig. 2, the outer housing 14 has an annular face surface 18 that surrounds and frames a precious stone 20 contained within the outer housing 14. The annular face surface 18 surrounds the stone 20 and provides for a pleasing appearance for the pendant 10. In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the entire outer housing 14 is gold plated, although other metal platings, such as platinum, are contemplated as being within the scope of the present invention.

[0021] Referring now to Fig. 3, there is shown an exploded view of the pendant that includes the interchangeable stone mounting arrangement of the present invention. As illustrated in Fig. 3, the pendant includes the outer housing 14 and a base portion 22. The base portion 22 includes a series of external threads 24 that receive a series of mating internal threads 26 formed along the inner wall of the outer housing 14. In this manner, the outer housing 14 can be threadably attached to the base portion 22. The base portion 22 includes the hanger 12 shown in Fig. 1.

[0022] Referring back to Fig. 3, the pendant preferably includes multiple stones 20a-20c that can be selectively removed and replaced by the owner of the pendant 10. For example, it is contemplated that the stone 20a could be a ruby, the stone 20b could be a diamond and the stone 20c an emerald. Since these three stones have different colors, the owner of the pendant 10 can selectively remove and replace the stones 20a-20c depending upon the type of outfit being worn by the owner. The replaceable stones 20a-20c allow the owner to change the appearance of the pendant 10 without requiring the purchase of different settings for each of the stones 20a-20c.

[0023] Referring now to Figs. 3 and 4, the base portion 22 includes a conical stone support surface 28 that angles inwardly from a top rim 30 of the base portion 22 to a bottom edge 32. The bottom edge 32 is spaced above the outer surface 33 of the base portion to properly present the stone 20b. The taper of the support

surface 28 is selected to generally correspond to the lower faceted portion 34 of each of the stones 20a-20c. Specifically, when the stone 20b is placed within the base portion 22, the lower portion 34 interacts with the stone support surface 28 to hold the stone in the position shown in Fig. 4.

[0024] Once the stone 20b is positioned within the base portion 22, the outer housing 14 is threadedly attached to the base portion 22, as best illustrated in Fig. 4. As the outer housing 14 moves downward due to the threaded interaction between the outer housing 14 and the base portion 22, the inner edge 36 of the annular face surface 18 moves into contact with the faceted upper portion 38 of the stone 20b.

[0025] As can be understood in Figs. 3 and 4, since both the stone support surface 28 of the base portion 22 and the inner edge 36 of the annular face surface 18 are circular, movement of the outer housing 14 along the base portion 22 self-centers the stone 20b. Further, the threaded movement of the outer housing 14 along the base portion 22 allows the pendant 10 to compensate for slight variations in the stone sizes 20a-20c. The inner diameter of the edge 36 is less than the maximum diameter 37 of the stone 20b such that the stone cannot fall through the opening 39 formed by the edge 36.

[0026] In addition to self-centering the stones 20a-20c, the mounting arrangement of the present invention allows a user to quickly and easily remove one of the stones 20a-20c and replace it with an alternate color or configuration. The configuration of the outer housing 14, and specifically the inner edge 36, self-centers the stone and provides a visually pleasing appearance to the stone, as shown in Fig. 2.

[0027] In accordance with the present invention, it is contemplated that the pendant 10 could be sold with one or more of the stones 20a-20c, or could be sold with only a single stone and the option to purchase additional stones as desired.

[0028] In the preferred embodiment of the invention, the base portion 22 is formed from a relatively soft material, such as bronze or brass, although other

metallic materials are contemplated as being within the scope of the present invention.

[0029] Various alternatives and embodiments are contemplated as being within the scope of the following claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter regarded as the invention.